

THE 1578 / 6281  
BEST MATCH:

OR, THE  
Incomparable Marriage

BETWEEN  
The CREATOR and the Creature.

Soundly and solidly, succinctly, and yet clearly and exactly explained, and closely and faithfully applied; in two SERMONS upon *Isaiah liv. 5.*

P R E A C H E D

By a learned, eminently pious and reverend Minister of the Gospel in the Church of *Scotland.*

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2 Cor. xi. 2. *I have espoused you to one Husband, that I may present you as a chaste Virgin to Christ.*

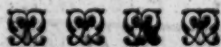
Jer. iii. 14. *Turn, O backsliding Children, saith the Lord, for I am married unto you.*

John iii. 29. *He that hath the Bride is the Bridegroom.*

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Never before published.

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# Christian Reader.

**T**Hou hast here presented to thy View, two Excellent Sermons, which (as thou wilt find) are not a rude Heap of indigested Matter, but that there is a plain Method and comely Order observed in handling them, which will sufficiently please the Fancy, intertain and gratifie the Understanding; while the incomparable Matter quickens, melts and inflames the Affections. The Subject here insisted on, is high and sublime, sweet and Precious, and of the greatest Importance unto the Souls of men, namely, the Spiritual Marriage between Christ and Believers.

Upon which Subject the Author gives thee a pleasant Account of the Parties married, the Terms, Properties and Effects of the Marriage, shews how it is carried on and Concluded, offers several sweet Remarks concerning the Time when it is made up, &c. Together with no less Than xviii. Soul searching Marks, all founded upon clear Scripture Testimony, whereby we may come to know (if God shall be pleased to shine upon them) whether or not we be matched with the blessed Bridegroom of Souls &c.

That the Mighty God, who only can command the Blessing, may so bless these two substantial and marrowy Sermons; as that they may refresh and comfort Believers, and awaken, allure and draw Sinners to Jesus Christ, rendering him more precious and eligible in their Eyes, and beginning those Sacred Nuptials which shall be for ever Solemnized in the Kingdom of God, is the serious and earnest Desire of.

15. 8. 81



# The best Match.

ISAIAH LIV. 5.

*Thy Maker is thy Husband.*

**T**HE Prophet *Isaiah* having largely discoursed of the Sufferings of Christ, and the blessed Fruits and Effects of them, among which one is, that he should have a numerous Seed to believe on him; and that, when the *Jews* reject him, the *Gentiles* should gladly receive him, and thus foreseeing, by the Spirit of Prophecy, the glorious State of the Gentile Church, he breaks forth into a Song of Triumph in the Beginning of this Chapter, where the Prophet directs his Speech to the Church and Spouse of God in these words, *Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear, break forth into Singing, and cry aloud thou that didst not travel with Child: for more are the Children of the desolate than the Children of the married Wife, saith the Lord.* Where we have a magnificent and glorious Promise of the Fertility and Felicity of the Gentile Church, and this is enlarged to the 5th verse, which contains the Words of our Text, where we have the Reason of her Happiness and Fruit-

fulness, who was formerly a barren Widow, *For thy Maker is thy Husband*, he who made thee out of nothing; and therefore can easily fulfil all these Promises, how unlikely soever they seem to be, he who made thee a People, yea, which is more, who made thee his People, he will own thee as his Spouse, and act the part of a Husband to thee.

I shall wave any further Introduction and Explication, and also whatever might be said concerning the external Relation betwixt Christ and the visible Church, my chief Design being at this time only, to speak a little to that internal spiritual Marriage-Relation betwixt Christ and the invisible Church, or Christ and the Believer, as it is represented under the Formality of a Marriage, and what I would offer upon this Subject, I lay before you in this doctrinal Proposition, That there is a Marriage-Relation betwixt Christ and Believers, wherein, he supplies the Place of a Husband unto them, and they the place of a Bride and Spouse to him.

In prosecuting whereof, I would 1. prove, That there is such a Marriage-Relation betwixt Christ and Believers. 2. Speak to the Nature of this Marriage. 3. Give the Reasons, why Christ comes under such a Relation to his People. 4. Make some Application.

I. To confirm the doctrine that there is a Marriage Relation betwixt Christ and Believers, this will appear from these two considerations.

1. From



1. From the Compellations given to Christ with Relation to Believers, how frequently doth the Spouse call him her Husband in the Book of the Song? *As the Apple Tree among the Trees of the Wood, so is my Beloved among the Sons. My Beloved is mine, and I am his.* Song ii. 3. 16. and says the Apostle 2. Cor. xi. 2. *I have espoused you to one Husband, that I may present you a chaste Virgin unto Christ.*

2. The Marriage Relation betwixt Christ and Believers appears, from the Compellations given to Believers in Scripture, with respect to Christ, how frequently calls he her his Love, his Spouse, in the Book of the Song? *Thou hast ravished my Heart, my Sister, my Spouse. How fair is thy Love, my Sister, my Spouse!* Song iv. 9, 10. Rev. xix. 7. *There the Church, (or Believers in the collective Capacity) is called the Bride, the Lambs Wife, The Marriage of the Lamb is come, And the Bride hath made her self ready.* We need not stand to prove that which is so evident, that we need say no more to confirm it, than to repeat the Text: *Thy Maker is thy Husband.* Therefore I come 2dly, to speak to the Nature of this Marriage, and here we would briefly consider;

1. The Parties married. 2. The Terms of the Marriage. 3. The Properties of the Marriage. 4. The Effects of it. 5. How the Match is carried on. 6. How it is concluded.

I. I say, let us consider, The Parties married, who is the Bridegroom, and who is the Bride,

A 3

1. Then

1. Then, The Bridegroom is the Wisdom of God, and all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge are found in him; He knows all the wants of the Bride, and is ready to supply them: On the other Hand, the Bride, before her matching with him, is the most arrant Fool out of Hell, her Folly is discovered, by continuing to refuse to match with him, to refuse to give her Consent to this Heavenly Bridegroom.

2. The Bridegroom is the eternal Son of God, the Kings only Son, *The King made a Marriage for his Son*; he is the Blood Royal of Heaven. On the other hand, what is the Bride's Pedigree? She needs not boast of her Descent. *Thy Father was an Amorite and thy Mother an Hittite. Ezek. xvi. 3.* there is a vast Difference here.

3. The Bridegroom is the Heir of all Things, he hath all Riches, the unsearchable Riches of Christ. But what is the Bride worth before he match with her? She is worse than nothing, Poverty it self, and not only a Beggar, but in Debt, and Christ is willing to pay her Debt.

4. The Bridegroom is comely and glorious, all the Seraphims and Cherubims above, all the Sons of Men in the World, all the Crown'd Heads on earth in all the circumstances of Glory are but like black Clods of Earth, compar'd with this glorious Bridegroom. On the other hand, what is the Bride before he match with her? Even as black as the Devil can make her, not only a Leopard spotted here  
and

and there, but an *Ethiopian* wholly black and ugly; when she is *cast forth in the open Field to the loathing of her Person*, she is a Spectacle of Horror and Misery, yet then it is a Marriage Day: and a Time of Love.

II. What are the Terms of the Marriage? The Articles of it on his Part and her Part, the Terms on her Part, tho' the whole belong to Christ, yet to speak of Terms in an improper Sense, he requires of her, what he worketh in her. namely,

1. That she be divorced from all other Husbands, and give up with all other Lovers and Idols; particularly, that she be divorced from the Law, that she may be married unto Christ; she must not obey the Law from a Principle of her own Strength, nor as a Covenant of Works, that, by Obedience, she may purchase a Title to Heaven, nor to gratifie a natural Conscience, nor meerly to escape Hell, and make a Righteousness of her Obedience, she must be divorced from that Husband.

2. Upon her part it is required, that she be satisfied with this Husband alone, as the great Portion of the Soul, that he may have no Rival, no Competitor in her Affections, none to sit on the Throne with him; she must keep the chief Room for the Son of God. Again, on his Part he contracts.

1. That he will make over himself to her, all he is, all he hath, all he hath purchased, all he hath

hath promised, he will make over to her all the Blessings of the Everlasting Covenant; O! This is a sweet Article! and a large Charter indeed!

2. He contracts to perform all the glorious Offices of a Husband to her, to provide for her, protect her, direct her, pity her, cloathe her, to encourage and comfort her, and to do all for her she needs: This is the Sum of the Contract; For to speak properly, Christ is all, and does all in this Matter; and our Part is done by him in us. *Hos. ii. 19, 20. I will betroth thee unto me for ever, yea, I will betroth thee unto me in Righteousness, and in Judgment, and in Loving Kindness, and in Mercies, I will even botroth thee unto me in Faithfulness; and thou shalt Know thee Lord:* Christ signs the Contract for him and her both, *I will betroth thee unto me in Righteousness*, I will fulfil the Law, and satisfie Gods Justice; *I will betroth thee unto me in loving Kindness*, tho' there be nothing in thee to invite my Love, but much to challenge my Averſion; yet I will overcome all thy Imperfections, and ſet my Love upon thee. *I will betroth thee unto me in Mercies*, in pardoning Mercy, ſanctifying Mercy, ſupporting Mercy, comforting Mercy; but leſt the Bride think, that when ever ſhe ſins there may be a divorce, ſhe may break and go away, therefore it follows, *I will betroth thee unto me in Faithfulneſs.* He pledges his Veracity for fulfilling the Articles on her Part and his both; But then,

3. What are the Properties, of this Marriage?

1. It



1. It is a very myſterious Marriage, that the Creator ſhould take the Work of his Hands for a Bride; not only when in its primitive and Virgin Integrity, as it dropt out of his creating Hands, but when polluted with the Poiſon of the Devil; The venom of the Serpent, that he ſhould take her for a Bride, *thy Maker is thy Husband*: This is a wonderful Conjunction. If a glorious Angel ſhould be matched with a creeping Worm, and a King with a Beggar, it would not be ſuch a Wonder, but the Maker to joyn himſelf to the Work of his Hands, There cannot be a greater diſtance conceived betwixt any Thing, than betwixt a Creator, and that which is brought out from the barren Womb of nothing, a Creature; and yet they are in a Marriage-Relation; *Thy Maker is thy Husband*.

2. This Marriage is very difficult and hard. 'Tis true there is nothing too hard for Omnipotency, yet the Human Nature of Chriſt had much to do with it, tho' he was ſupported by the Divine Nature, yet he behoved to ſwim thro' the River of his own Blood, before he could get his Bride. He ſatiſfied the Juſtice of God, eſtabliſhed a new Covenant. All this muſt be done in Order to this Marriage.

3. This Marriage is an indiffolvable Marriage, Death diſſolves other Relations; But it increaſes this intimate Union: Nothing ſhall ſeparate Chriſt and the Believer, *I am perſwaded, ſays Paul, that neither Life, nor Death, nor Angels*

*nor Principalities, nor Powers, nor Things presents, nor Things to come, nor Height, nor Depth, nor any other Creature shall be able to separate us from the Love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Rom. 8. 38. 39.*

iv. What are the Effects of this Marriage, the first and immediate Effect is a most close Union betwixt Christ and the Believer. This Union, tho' less than a personal Union, altho' it be so in some Respect, yet it is more than a political Union, more than a moral Union; It is a very close Union, the Bridegroom Christ, he gives his Bride his own Spirit, communicates vital Influences, from the glorious Head to her, and she cleaves by Faith and Love close to him: and God promiseth that he will make the House of Israel cleave close to him as a girdle to the Loins of a Man. *Jer. xiii. 11.* He makes his Spouse, in Spite of all her Folly, in Spite of all her Enmity, in Spite of all her Enemies, and Temptations, to cleave close to Him.

2. Another Effect of this Union is sweet Communion, mutual Fellowship, he feasts with them and they with him, he blows upon her Garden, quickens and animates her Graces, and then he comes and eats his pleasant Fruits.

3. Another Effect is Familiarity, (which is coincident with the former,) he treats them not as Strangers, but as Friends, and not as Friends only, but as his own Spouse, he communicates

to her, and speaks comfortably and kindly to her. It is a Wonder what Condescension God will make sometimes; And the Believer again can be more familiar with God, than with the whole World; And can tell to God what he can tell to none else: Thus you see some of the Effects of this Marriage.

V. How was the match carried on.

I Answer in a Word, on his Part it was carried on thus.

1. He gave the Father his Hand, and engaged to him in the Covenant of Redemption, from Eternity, that he would do all Things necessary for accomplishing the Marriage.

2. Because there must be an Union of Natures betwixt the Bridegroom and the Bride. It was not possible that we could be matched with the Divine Nature; therefore he becomes a Man, and takes on our Nature, that there might be an Union of Natures.

3. Because the Bride is a Slave, he pays her Ransom, substitutes himself in her Room, takes on her Debt, and pays all that she owed to Justice, and then takes on with her; but on our Part just nothing at all, we had no Hand in the Covenant of Redemption, no Hand in the Contrivance of Salvation, we knew nothing about the Business, we had no Thoughts of a Redeemer, deserv'd nothing but pure Wrath, we were lying with full Contentment in the Devil's Territories, when Christ was carrying on the Match,

6. How

## VI. How is the Marriage concluded upon his Part.

1. He sends forth his Ambassadors to court for him, as Abraham did his Servant for Isaac, and there is a great Work indeed, to make her give her consent, let all the Angels in Heaven Unite their Topicks of Perswasion, they could not prevail with one Soul, if a converting Day were not come; but they must always speak fair to her. How Rhetorical was Abraham's Servant! His Heart was enlarged, when courting for his Master, he hath but one Child, and that Child hath great Riches, he seeks no Portion with Rebecca, only her Consent; Thus he Rhetorizes and flourishes exceedingly, and perswades with the greatest Motives; but yet the Ambassadors of Christ have a larger Commission, if our Eyes were opened to see it: They are sent forth to make Love to the Bride, and in his Name, to commend Christ.

2. He concludes the Marriage thus, the Bride being wretchedly ignorant of her true Happiness; Therefore his Father distresses her with the Debt that she owes to him, and the wretched Person is driven for some Time to Mount Sinai, and there God descends in all the Circumstances of terrible Majesty, he thunders against Her, Curses Her, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, which are written in the Book of the Law to do them. Gal. III. 10.* God exacts all the Debt, Conscience roars, and the Devil

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Devil is let loose, she fears Hell and Wrath, and God declares in the Gospel, That the wretched Dyvour shall go to Prison and ly Eternally in Hell, if she do not take on with his Son, marry him, and believe on him. Thus the Bride is driven to an Extremity, some have more, some have less of this Law work, but all are humbled and broken in some Measure, who are married to Christ, he sends forth his Spirit and convinces the World of Sin. But this would not do either. And therefore,

3. The Bridegroom sees that nothing but Condescension will do it, and so he appears in all his Glory, when the Bride is full of Fears, Perplexities and Anxieties, when the Terrors of God are surrounding her, and the Arrows of the Almighty drinking up her Spirits, and when she is crying out, what shall I do? Whither shall I go? Then the Bridegroom appears in all his Excellency and Glory, and says, Behold me, Behold me, and she gets a View of him that ravishes her Heart, and enlarges her Soul; then it is that the Spirit is sent, to determine her to consent, the Manifestation of his Glory does enlighten her Mind and Spirit, and immediately, Grace, upon the will, draws out the whole Heart after him; so that if the Bride could be grieved and pained upon the Marriage Day, it would be for her Folly in refusing him so long. But what is done upon the Bride's Part, for concluding the Match? Nothing at all, but the whole Soul is enabled to acquiesce in a Redeemer; and The Believer is ready, at such a  
Time

Time to say, *He is My Lord, My God, My Strength; My all*, and shall be so for ever. Thus, you have a brief Scheme of the Nature, and Way of this Marriage.

Having spoken but very briefly to the former Heads, I shall here, before I proceed to the Reasons of the Doctrine, offer a few Remarks upon the Time of this Marriage-Union; betwixt Christ and Believers. We told you, how This Match was concluded and compleated by Christ: And now we say There is a stated Day and Time for the concluding thereof; and upon this Head, we may Remark.

1. That there is a two-fold Day we are to consider in this Marriage; namely, the Day of Espousal on Earth; and the Day of Consummation in Heaven; and we may compare these two together, in few Words (1) The Day of Espousals here is usher'd in with a very dark Morning, or rather an Evening upon the Bride's Part, with the Wrath of God and the Law; as it was said, The Evening and the Morning was the Day; so in this Contract, the Evening of legal Terrors, at least some deep Humiliation ushers in the Morning: But as to the Consummation, there is a great deal of Glory before it, the Soul being taken to Heaven already, and the Body sleeping sweetly in the Grave, a Bed where the Bridegroom lay three Days before her. (2) In the Day of Espousals, when the Person gets a Victory over Corruption, and finds little stirring of it, no sensible working of it,

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it, yet there is a Party within, at the same Time, that says nay to the Match, and which will afterwards get out its Head, and will be still assaulting the Believer, while he is on Earth; But in the Day of Consummation, there is no such Thing, no Enmity, no Sin, no Corruption but the whole Soul goes out wholly upon the Bridegroom. (3) the Espousals is carried on secretly, may be the Person is sitting at your Side, and you do not see, nor know when Christ is making up the Match; or perhaps on his Knees at Home, there is a secret Transaction, but the Consummation will be before Millions of Angels, Millions of Saints, Millions of Spectators, here is a great Difference, after the Day of Espousals is over, the Bride may give many squint Looks to her old Lovers, looking back to Egypt, departing from her Husband, doubting of his Love, distrusting his Word, fearing his Dispensations: But, after the Consummation, no Shadow of Sin, no Shadow of Jealousie, no Shadow of Mistakes or Fears can overtake her for ever, no Cloud can intervene, for the Sun of Righteousness shall never be eclipsed any more. But then,

A 2d. Remark is, that the precise Time of the Espousals is condescended on by the Bridegroom and his Father, from all Eternity; the very Moment when the Bride shall be made to sign the Contract, and flee to Christ, and pour out her whole Soul upon him, that Precise Moment is agreed upon betwixt the Father

and the Son in the Covenant of Redemption from Eternity.

3. We remark, that the Bridegroom waits patiently for that moment that is agreed upon betwixt the Father and the Son; he longs for it, he desires it, the Believer many Times is ready to Think, O Christ is not willing! I have set Days apart, I have gone to my Knees, I have sought him about this Ordinance and the other, and yet I could not close with him, I have been almost dipt in Hell with Affliction, yet my heart was never melted, surely Christ is not willing: O let us flee the Borders of Blasphemy! The Lord Jesus is willing, but the Fulness of Time is not yet come, there is a set Moment of his coming to his People, and for this they are to wait, yea, for this he waits Himself, according to that Scripture, which I shall read to them that cannot get that at Duties and Ordinances, which they have been long looking for. Isa. xxx, 18. *Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have Mercy upon you: For the Lord is a God of Judgment; blessed are all they that wait for him.* He will wait upon the very Moment of Time, for the Day of Salvation, he knows the proper Season: The Crane the Swallow and the Stork know their Seasons by the natural Instinct God hath given them: And will he not know his own Season? yea, he waits to be gracious,

4. Remark that when the Time comes, then there



there is a sweet Conjunction of all Circumstances to conclude the Work, all Things work pleasantly together to compleat the Match; Conscience goes right to Work, the Word is made lively, the Spirit acts powerfully and sweetly in the Soul, there is an auspicious Conjunction of all favourable Circumstances, for determining the Bride, and drawing out her Heart.

5. Remark, That there are several Signs and Characters of this Day, by which it may be known, what are the Signs of it? you'll say, I shall not stand on this, only it is a Day, Light, Great Light breaks in upon the Mind; it is a Day of Love, much Love is let in upon the Heart, it is a Day of Power, wherein the Bride is perswaded and overcome, Difficulties are surmounted, Enemies conquer'd, and the Bride's Will is moulded into a Compliance: It is a Day of Amazement, O what an Extasy of Wonder is rais'd in the Person's Heart! I was blind, now I see; I was dead, now I live; I was weak, now I am strong; this Morning, perhaps, I was under Affliction, and under the Terrors of God, and now he hath Ravished me with the Consolations of his Spirit: I was afraid of Hell, now I have the Hope of Heaven and Eternal Life. O what a Day of Wonder is it! Lastly it is a Day of Vows, the Soul will be ready to break forth in such a Day, crying, what shall I speak for him? What shall I suffer for him.

A. 6th. And last Remark on this Head is  
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that in this stated Day of Espoufals, the Bridegroom manifests his Glory to his Bride; when he intimats to the Soul, *Thy Maker is thy Husband*, he shews his Glory, his absolute Glory, his comparative Glory, his relative Glory, they are all one upon the Matter, yet there is a formal different Consideration of them, (1) His absolute Glory is manifested, what does the Soul see, that is matched and married to Christ? Alas! some see nothing, but Dreams and Fancies: But when the Believer is matched with Christ, he so deals with him as with Moses, he makes all his Glory pass before him: The Person gets a View of the glorious Attributes of the Son of God. (2) He manifests his comparative Glory *Thou art more excellent than Hills of Prey, fairer than the Sons of Men*, the Bride, the Believer sees him, *as the Apple Tree among the Trees of the Wood*, every way incomparable, what ever he be compar'd to, he excells it, if he be a Lilie, he is the Lilie of the Valley; if he be a Rose, he is the Rose of Sharon; if he be a Plant, he is the Plant of Renown; if he be a Physician, he is the Physician of Value; if an Advocate, he is an Advocate with the Father; he is represented without any Parallel. (3) His relative Glory is manifested, he is discovered as a glorious Priest, a glorious Prophet, a glorious King, a glorious Husband, a glorious Redeemer and Saviour; and there will be a Sight of his glorious Fulness in all these Relations, and the glorious Finess of that Sufficiency and Fulness

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all suited for the Soul, and thus revealing himself, he removes all Jealousies and Mistakes from the Bride, supplies all her Wants, heals all her Diseases, and outbids all her Rivals, who can offer nothing to allure the Soul, while he can, and doth say, I am Allsufficient to Help thee.

## S E R M O N II.

*Isa. liv, 5. Thy Maker is thy Husband.*

**I** Come now to the 3d Thing proposed, *namely*, to offer Reasons of the Doctrine, why Christ comes under a Marriage-Relation to Believers?

**I** Answer 1. His own Sovereign Will is the best Reason, why he comes under a Marriage Relation in this case; *Even so Father, for so it seems good in thy Sight. Matth. xi, 26.* his Actions

are not to be examined at the Bar of our Reason. *He hath Mercy, because he will have Mercy.*

2. His Love to them makes him come under such a Relation to them; *I have loved thee with an everlasting Love: Therefore, with everlasting Kindness have I drawn thee.* Love is the Motive that engages him, Love brought him out of Heaven for them, Love nailed him to the Cross for them, Love laid him in a Grave for them, & Love engages him to a Marriage-Relation with them.

3. He does it for the Glory of his own free Grace, Mercy, and Love; as Love and Mercy was his Motive, so it was his End, that he might display and discover it to the utmost. This Attribute is at its utmost Line: Infinite Wisdom could have contriv'd a Thousand

Worlds, and Infinite Power could have made them, but the Love of God hath gone to its outmost Height, it is not possible for Christ to give a greater Demonstration of his Love, than he hath done, in giving his Life for the Bride, and entering into a Marriage-Relation with her.

4. He does it, that he may make Work for the blessed Company in the higher House; for on Earth, the Contract is only drawn up, this is only the Day of Espousals; Heaven will be the Day of Consummation of the Marriage: This is only a courting and wooing Time; but the Day will come, when the nuptial Solemnity shall be celebrated: And that shall continue while the Day of Eternity lasts. This shall suffice for the Reasons of the Doctrine.

The 4th. Thing was, to make some Application; and it may be (1) for Information. (2) Lamentation. (3) Examination. (4) Exhortation. Now of these in their Order,

1. For Information, is it so, that there is a Marriage-Relation betwixt Christ and Believers? This informs us, of the Infinite Love of God towards lost Sinners, in giving his own Son to be a Husband and Redeemer unto them. *God so Loved the World, That he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever Believeth in him might not Perish, but have everlasting Life. John. iii, 16.* God so Loved the World, as neither Angels nor Men can tell.

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such a Bride, it could never have entered into the Heart of the wisest Angel in Heaven, that Christ the Eternal Son of God should become Man; and far less, that he should take such a foul and deformed Creature, and Bride by the Hand, as Sinners are. If he had given us our deserving, he would made his Justice to ride in Triumph over us, and Hell to ring with eternal Hallows of Praise to incensed Justice; but to the quite contrary, he hath so ordered, that Heaven shall ring with eternal Hallelujahs of Praise to his gracious Mercy and free Grace, in choosing these that were Enemies, and admitting them to his blessed Bosom.

3. This Doctrine informs us of the Believer's Safety; having Christ for his Husband, who can hurt him? It is the Duty of a Husband, you know, to protect and defend his Spouse, and to be sure Christ will not be wanting in this to his Bride. *He will hide them in the secret of his Presence from the Pride of Men: He will keep them secretly in a Pavilion from the strife of Tongues. Psal xxxi, 20. About all the Glory he makes a defence. Isa. iv, 5.* He covers them with the Mantle of his Providence, the Mantle of his Righteousness, the Mantle of his Intercession, the Mantle of his Spirit; sure then the Bride of Christ is in absolute Safety, he hath retiring Chambers for her, to hide her in, till the Day of Indignation be overpast.

4. This Doctrine lets us see, that Believers are no such mean and despicable Persons as the World

World generally takes them to be, they are Christs Bride, and he is their Husband; and O What a Honour is it to be Married to the Son of God! having him for a Husband, they come to be related to all Christs Relations; God is their Father, because he is his Father; Angels are their Servants, because they are his Servants; Saints are their fellow Brethren, because they are his Members: Heaven is their Inheritance, because it is the Kingdom of their Husband. In a Word, whatever is his, is theirs. *And all Things are yours for ye are Christs and Christ is Gods.* 1. Cor. iii, 22, 23.

2. For Lamentation. Is it so, that there is a Marriage-Relation betwixt Christ and Believers? This calls for deep Lamentation in these two Particulars.

1. It calls us to lament. that Christ should have so few Brides among us, tho' he be wooing and courting us by the Gospel; crying, *Behold me, Behold me.* Isa. lxv, 1. yet where is the Man or Woman, that is prevail'd with to enter a Match with this glorious Bridegroom? Tho' he be fairer than the Sons of Men, and condescends to offer Marriage with Sinners, who are as black and ugly as Hell it self, yet they set him at nought, and give him just ground for that melancholy Complaint. *My People would not hearken to my Voice, Israel would have none of me.* Psal. lxxxii, 11. and may he not appeal to the very material Creation, to judge of our Folly, as he did of old to Israel? *Jer. ii, 12, 13. Hear, O Heavens*

O Heavens, and give ear, O Earth: Ye be astonish-  
ed and horribly afraid; for my People have commit-  
ted two great Evils: They have forsaken me the  
Fountain of living Waters, and hewed them out  
Cisterns, broken Cisterns that can hold no Water.

2. This Doctrine may afford us Matter of La-  
mentation also, that Believers, who are espoused  
to him, should Walk so unworthily of such a  
Husband, you know a Wife should demean her  
self, conform to the Character of her Husband,  
and where her Carriage is base and mean, it re-  
flects a Dishonour on him. O how unfutable is  
it, to see Christ's Bride blacked with the foul of  
Hell! to see these who have stricken Hands  
with Christ in a Marriage Covenant, joyning  
Hands with Lusts and Idols, and defiling  
themselves with them?

3. For Examination, let us try, if we be  
thus Married and related to Christ, whether he  
be our Husband, and we his Bride and Spouse.

I shall offer a few Marks whereby we may  
know, whether or not we be married unto this  
glorious Husband, and they may be drawn  
from the Consideration of the Antecedents, the  
Constituents, and the Consequents of this  
Marriage.

1. Try, by the Antecedents to the Marriage-  
Contract, before ever Christ did contract with  
thee, didst thou observe him courting thy Soul  
before this Contract? Here is a courting, now  
how did Christ court you?

1. Did he court you by the Austerity of the  
Law,

Law, as with Fire and Sword? Did he court you by such a Word as that? Thou art a cursed Wretch; for *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all Things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them.* Gal. iii, 10. did he court you with such a Word as that? *Cursed is every one that doth the Work of the Lord negligently.* Did he court you thus, by the Spirit of Bondage, with the Terrors of God, as cloathed with Vengeance? Telling thee, thou art an Heir of Hell, and Wrath, a Child of the Devil. Did he court thee so, as thou wast furrounded with Fear and Trouble?

2. Did he court thee, as by the Austerity of the Law, so by the Suavity of the Gospel, when he saw thee in the Depth of Despondency, when he saw thee cast down, when he saw thee a poor heavy laden Sinner, like to be crushed under thy Weights: Did he then court you with such a Word as that? *Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you Rest.* Matth. xi, 28. or with such a Word as that? *Ho every one that thirsteth, come to the Waters; he that hath no Money; come, buy Wine and Milk without Money, and without Price.* Isa. lv, 1. *Flee to your strong Holds, ye Prisoners of Hope.* Did he thus court you with the Gospel Offer?

3. Did he court you by his Love-Letters? This is another Antecedent of the Contract, got you ever a Love-Letter, sent from Christ out of Heaven? But you will say, what is the Love-Letter? Even the Bible, *Search the Scriptures,* these

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*these are they, that testifie of me. John v, 32.*

Here there are the Declarations of the Love of Christ to thy Soul; here there are love Promises in these Letters, that shall be yours; there is a love Covenant in these Letters, have you read and ponder'd them? And can you say, that Christ spake them into your Heart? If it be a Text that was preached upon, or if it be a single Word, O! Christ dropt that into my Heart, and, I think it will go with me to my Death-Bed: It came with such Life and Power. In a Word, got you any Gifts before the Marriage Contract? Such as, the Gift of true Conviction, such as, the Gift of Heart Contrition, the Gift of real Humiliation, the Gift of self Denial, the Gift of Faith; these are given, some before, some at the Contract.

2. Try, by the Constituents of the Marriage:

1. If this Marriage be made up betwixt Christ and thee, then thou hast put away all Lovers besides Christ, the right Hand will be cut off, the right Eye put out, you will be divorced from all other Husbands; particularly, from the Law; ye must be dead to the Law, that ye may be married to another Husband, even to Christ. But you will say, what is it to be dead to the Law? I answer, it is not to lay it aside as the Rule of Obedience, for the Law shall still be the Rule and Standard of the Believers Obedience, Life, and Conversation; but to be dead to the Law, is to be sensible, that the Law cannot save us; as a Covenant of

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Works.

**Works.** It is to disclaim all Hopes of being justified by the Law, or by our Works and Obedience to it. I see Christ the glorious Husband hath brought in an everlasting Righteousness, answering the Law fully; this is the Garment I will put on, and cast off my old filthy Rags.

2. Hast thou given a cordial Consent upon the Contract Day? Can you say, you was enabled to take him, as the Psalmist, *O my Soul thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord,* and thou art my God, my Head, my Husband. Have you given a rational consent to it; yea, a superrational and supernatural Consent, a deliberate, chaste, stayed, solemn, peremptory Consent? Did you say it with Faith, and with an Air of Heaven? That he was yours, and shall be so for ever. It's true, Folk may be matched to Christ, who cannot condescend on the precise Time; the Spirit may Work many Times some Way that we cannot know; yet it is his ordinary Way with his Bride, after many Tossings, to break in with ravishing, conquering Sweetness, to draw forth her Soul to a solemn, remarkable closing with him, and consenting to him. Have you then been engaged to make over your self to the Bridegroom, by an unreserved Resignation of your self to him? That you will not only take him wholly, and for ever, for Holiness and Happiness, for Light and Life, for Grace and Glory; but also make over your self to him, Soul and Body, whatever you are,

are, whatever you have been. Have you been thus made to yield your selves to the Lord? Are you one with him? Have you one Spirit with him? Are you of one Faith with him, of one Way with him, endeavouring to walk as he walked? *He that is joyned to the Lord, is one Spirit,* 1. Cor. iv, 17.

3. Can you say? That upon the Marriage Day, ye got a Marriage Gift from the Bridegroom. Among the Jews, the Bridegroom was to give a Marriage Gift to his Bride; now, what Gift got you on the Marriage Day? Can you say? Indeed, I got the wedding Garment, he clothed me with his Righteousness; which he span out of his own Bowels, weaved with his own Hands, and died with his own Blood, and thus all my Guilt is covered, the Curse is done away. This is indeed what few get, yet some have been, and are able to say, I am delivered from the Wrath to come: And there is no Condemnation to me, and on such a Time, I got also an Ornament of the Graces with the Spirit, which I wear as Jewels; Faith, Love, Obedience, Patience, Humility: And I got the Promise of an hundred Fold here, and I am expecting more Gifts yet, before the Marriage be consummate. I am expecting the Assurance, I live in the Hope of Glory, I expect a sealed Pardon of all my Sins; and I look to get the Earnest of the Spirit: And more every Day.

4. Another Constituent of this Marriage Contract is, The Bride, on that Day, puts off

one Vail, and puts on another; this was the Jews Custom, the Brides put off the Vail of Bashfulness and put on the Vail of Subjection. Christ's Bride, before the Marriage, do not look the Bridegroom in the Face, is ashamed to look upon him; but she is made to put off this Vail in the Presence of her former Lovers, and to take Christ by the Hand, and then she puts on the Vail of Subjection, whereby she promises, in his Strength, to Subject to her Husbands will. Have we thus promised to be obedient to his Commands, in his own Strength? Whatever he bids us do, or suffer.

3. Try by the Consequents of this Marriage: Would you know, if there has been a Contract betwixt Christ and you? Then try by the immediate Consequents.

1. Did you see the King in his Beauty, and such a Glory and Excellency in him, as could not be parallell'd by all the Glory of ten thousand Worlds?

2. What was your Converse with him on the Contract Day? Can you say? he embraced me in his Arms, and I embraced him in my Heart, and there was sweet Communion and Fellowship betwixt him, and me.

3. Wast thou crown'd on the Marriage Day, so as thou wast known by others, as it were to be the Bride of Christ? The Jews, they not only crown'd the Bridegroom, but the Bride also: You see what the Crown is that Christ's Bride should have. *Rev. xii, 1. There appeared*  
*a great*



a great Wonder in Heaven, a Woman clothed with the Sun, and the Moon under her Feet, and on her Head a Crown of twelve Stars. The Bride of Christ is crown'd with the Doctrine of the twelve Apostles.

4. The Bride of Christ keeps at Home, and delights in the Bride-Chamber; this is her Delight, all the Days of her Life, to dwell in the House of the Lord, to behold the Beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his Temple. Ordinances will be sweet, being the Galleries wherein the King is held.

2. Try by the Qualities and Duties of the Bride, which are also Consequents to this Marriage.

1. If you be Christ's Bride, then you will love the Bridegroom; Love is what every Wife owes to her Husband, much more doth the Believer owe it to Christ: Who hath express'd far more Love to his Bride, than ever a Husband did to a Wife. *He Loved her, and gave himself for her.* He shed the hottest Blood of his Heart, to save and redeem her. You will love him with a love of desire. *With my Soul have I desired thee in the Night,* with a Love of Delight, *my meditation of him shall be sweet.* With a Love of Benevolence, wishing well to his Interest. *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right Hand forget her Cunnings. Let my Tongue cleave to the Roof of my Mouth, if I prefer not thee to my chief Joy.* *Psal. cxxxvii, 5, 6.* They that habitually Love Husband, Wife, Children, Riches,

Riches, or any Thing more than Christ, have no Reason to think that they are matched with him.

2. If we be married to Christ, we will trust in, and depend on our Husband, in whom can a Wife trust, if not in her Husband? The Believer rests on Christ for Grace and Glory, and commits all to him, ventures all on him, and expects all from him. The Soul that is espoused to Christ, looks on the infinite Vertue of his Blood; The infinite Efficacy of his Spirit; The infinite Fulness of his Grace; The infinite Dimensions of his Love; The infinite Faithfulness of his Promise. In all this, he sees an infinite Ground of Hope, and thereupon he Ventures, and rolls all on him. Here he says, I'll stay and rest, here I'll build, here I am resolved to stay, here I am resolved to live and die.

3. If we be married to Christ, we will have a Zeal for his Glory. Some sacrifice Christ's Interest to their own Honour; But the Believer says, let my Master increase, and me decrease. Tho' my name should never be heard of in the World, let Christ be exalted. O! says Christ's Bride, I would have all the World coming and adoring him: I would have all the World to love him: I would have all the World to praise him: Especially, when she is under any lively Influence, O! then says she, if the greatest Enemies knew what were in our Lord, they would come and joyn with him: As I have done.

4. The

4. The Bride of Christ dow not live without him, an honest Wife will be hard put to it, to live many Years without her Husband; O! it is sometimes like a Hell to her to miss Christ in Ordinances. O! the sore Moans and heavy Groans of the deserted Soul, that has had the Experience of the Sweetness of Christ: *O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his Seat. Job, xxiii, 13. O that it were with me, as in Moneths past!*

5. If ye be Christ's Bride, you will be longing sometimes for his second coming; less or more you will desire the Day of Judgment, and long for his Appearance, the Epilogue of all the Spouse's sweet Discourses, is, *Make haste, my beloved, be thou like a Roe, or a young Hart on the Mountains of Bether; till the Day break, and the Shadows flee away.* And the Conclusion of the whole Bible is. *Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Rev, xxii, 20.* Can you say you have longed for his coming? I see the Devil reigns here, Corruption reigns here, and never will Things be right, till he come again in the Clouds, and set Heaven and Earth in a Flame; when these nuptial Solemnities shall begin to be celebrated: And the Marriage solemnized while Eternity lasts,

6. If there has been a Marriage betwixt Christ and your Souls, then readily you have some of the love Tokens to present; I mean some Experiences, and some Expressions of his Covenant Love. You can tell, that some Time

or other he brought you to the banquetting House, and displayed a Banner of Love over you; sometime he hath enlarged your Soul with ardent and longing Desires after him, and satisfied thee with the Fatness of his House; the Soul, that is really espoused to Christ, will readily have some Experiences of his Love to tell of.

7. The Spouse of Christ, is a chaste Spouse, Idols never get her Heart as before, tho' now and then she may give a squint Look, yet Idols never have that Force and Room in her Affections that once they had, she is afraid of doing any Thing that may be displeasing and dishonouring to him, hence we will find the Spouse of Christ breathing out earnest Desires and Requests to God, to be kept and led in the way of Righteousness. *O! that my Ways were directed to keep thy Statutes. Psal, cxix, 5.* Hence she groans up her Case. *O! wretched one that I am, who shall deliver me from this Body of Sin and Death? Rom, vii, 24.*

8. If we be Christ's Bride, we will be a fruitful Bride, let us try, have we never a Child of good Works, or of Grace? *Thy Belly, says Christ to the Spouse, is as an Heap of Wheat. Song, vii, 2.* Ye know Wheat is very fruitful; the barren Soul that never loved, never mortified, never repented, never gave Alms, never appeared for God; that barren Soul is not the Spouse of Christ: For the Spouse of Christ is fruitful. Thus much by Way of Tryal.

4. For Exhortation, is there a spiritual Marriage



riage betwixt Christ and Believers; O then! shall we not be perswaded to come and close with Christ for our Husband; and take our Maker for our Husband; our God for our Husband? If we be ambitious, here is the top of Ambition, Jesus Christ; if we be covetous, here is the true Riches; whatever we are, whatever we have been; if we come to him, he will in no wise cast us out. It is true, we cannot come of our selves: But let us cry, Lord, if I die, I shall be buried under the Mercy-Seat, praying, weeping, looking as I can, and go to Hell with Christ in my Heart as much as I can. Come to him, and he will overcome your Impotency; lay your Case before him, saying, Lord, I am a Wretched one in the highest Degree: Lord here is a great Offer made, I have no Heart to it; O! come, and give a discovery of a lost State, and of thy excellent Glory: O! draw out my Heart, and let me die upon the Spot, rather than reject Christ for ever.

Many Motives might be adduc'd, consider only.

1. The Loveliness and Beauty of Christ, his Beauty is universal, he is lovely in his Person, lovely in his Natures, lovely in his Offices, lovely in his Estates of Humiliation and Exaltation, lovely in all his Relations, his Beauty is transforming, it will make the Bride comely also; it is communicative, the Bride is made comely, thro' his Comeliness. When we speak of the Comeliness of Christ, we should let Angels and

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Saints

Saints above, that have the more immediate Intuition of the radiant Splendor of this blessed Object, go forth to declare his Glory. Every Thing in him is lovely, and nothing is lovely without him, nothing lovely but what proceeds from him, and goes to him; he is so lovely, that he cannot possibly be otherwise, he is the primary, original and necessary Loveliness.

2 Consider, as he is lovely, so he is loving; his Love is infinite, eternal, free, distinguishing, effectual; never Man loved like him: O! how many Foldings are in this Love? As can never be unfolded.

3. Consider, if we close with Christ, we will give him a glad Heart: His Heart is glad in that Day, when he takes a poor Sinner by the Hand; the Day of his Espousals is the Day of the Gladness of his Heart. How many a Time have we grieved him by our Hypocrisy, and Formality, and Backwardness? And would we now give him a glad Heart, for all the grieved Hearts we have given him; then let us embrace him, as offered in the Gospel, and then he will be glad, why? Then he will see the Fruit of Election, the Fruit of Redemption, the Fruit of his Death, the Fruit of his Resurrection, the Fruit of his Ascension, the Fruit of his Intercession. Then he gets back the Temple of the Holy Ghost; the lost Sheep is found again; then he gets back the Member of his own Body.

I might

I might give something by way of Direction. You may say, what shall I do then, that I may be married unto Christ?

In one Word, if you would have Christ for your Husband, O then! entertain his Suit, and hearken to his wooing and courting Motions. Is he darting Light unto your Hearts, and letting you see the evil of some Sin, that formerly ye delighted in? O! do not resist his Suit, by continuing in Sin after this. Is he strengthening that Light so, as to set Conscience on Fire with the Sense of Sin, and Apprehension of Wrath? O! quench not this Fire till you get Water out of the Wells of Salvation; otherwise ye reject his Suit. Is he carrying his Suit further, and stirring up your Affections to desire after Christ? O! quench not this Motion: But cry to him to fasten the Nail sure, and carry on the Work, till the Marriage be completed.

Now, I might give a Word of Exhortation also to them that are married and espoused to Christ.

All I shall say is this, O! let Christ's Bride live on him, and take all from him: As a poor Woman married to a rich Man, she lives upon his Riches. Many are ready to say, that if Christ would call us his Bride, we would live on our selves; we would pray, repent, believe, &c. But the Bride of Christ must get all these Things in him, and take all from him, and live wholly on him, and freely on him.

When Joseph's Brethren did not know him, they were Buying and Selling with him, they would have nothing from him without Money: But when they knew that he was a Brother, for all the Offences that they had done him, they were content to come down every Man of them, and take all from him for Nothing. This is the Way ye must do with Christ, when matched to him; we must not, with the Legalist, have Repentance and Duties of our own, we will take all from him, who is the Repository of all Divine Fulness, whereof the Believer's Part is, out of that Fulness, to receive Grace for Grace.

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